

Social Perception

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CHAPTER 4

Social Perception

- Processes through which people can understand each other and their behaviors
- **Observation**: the elements of social perception
Physiognomy (reading character from faces)
- Baby faces versus mature faces: types of persons
- Findings in work settings
- **Impressions that we form about persons through their appearance**

Situations: the scripts of life

- **Cultural differences** in meanings of behaviors (Bolivia and India)
- **Social scripts** influence perceptions and behaviors
- **Gender differences** on aggression
- **Knowledge of social settings** (interview, picnic)
EXAMPLE: ambiguous expression of face is perceived in context of different situation differently (threatened by dog, won lottery)

Silent language of nonverbal behavior

- Physical actions to determine inner states
- Nonverbal behavior
- Social value of face
- Eye contact
- Touch (hand shake)
- Distinguishing truth from deception

Attributions: from elements to dispositions

- Attributions
- **Attribution theories:** personal and situational attributions
- **1. Jone's Correspondent Inference Theory**
- **Choice, Expectedness Of Behavior, Intended Effects**
- **2. Kelly's Covariation Theory (Covariation Principle)**
- **Consensus, Distinctiveness, Consistency**

Attribution Biases: Cognitive Heuristics

- people often make attributions and other types of social judgments by using certain cognitive heuristics
- cognitive heuristics are information-processing rules of thumb that enable us to think in ways that are quick and easy but that frequently lead to error

Types of cognitive heuristics

- **1. Availability Heuristic** tendency to estimate the odds that an event will occur by how easily instances of it pop to mind
- **2. False-consensus Effect** a tendency for people to overestimate the extent to which others share their opinions, attributes, and behaviors.
- Regardless of whether people are asked to predict how others feel about military spending, gun control, types of music, they exaggerate the percentage of others who behave similarly or share their views

- **3. base-rate fallacy**

- fact that people are relatively insensitive to numerical base rates, or probabilities; they are influenced more by graphic, dramatic events such as the sight of photograph of bodies being pulled from the wreckage of a plane crash.

- **4. counterfactual thinking** the tendency to imagine alternative outcomes that might have occurred but did not. *“You don’t win silver, you lose gold.”*

- **5. fundamental attribution error**
- The tendency to focus on the role of personal causes and underestimate the impact of situations on other people's behavior.
- When people explain the behavior of others, they tend to overestimate the role of personal factors and overlook the impact of situations.
- **6. self-fulfilling prophecy** The process by which one's expectations about a person eventually lead that person to behave in ways that confirm those expectations.
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Culture and Attribution

- anthropologist Edward Sapir, Benjamin Lee Whorf (1956) theorized that the language people speak—the words, the rules,.....determines the way they conceptualize the world.
- **Use of words to represent reality.**
- Hanunoo of the Philippines: 92 different terms for rice
- North Americans: “white rice” and “brown rice.”
- English speakers have one word for snow; while Eskimos have 9 words
- Urdu: 3 words to address others while in English only one word (YOU)

- 102-122